1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

return to the *lupanda*, where the initiates are welcomed by their friends. An essential part of the ceremony which takes place at this stage is the exhibition of animal shapes made by the *n'mizwa*, with mounds of earth outlined in flour. These animal shapes differ from lodge to lodge. On the last night before the return to the village the initiates undergo a ceremonial bathing, each boy being carried to the stream by a woman, who thereafter is addressed as 'elder sister'. Finally, with new names, and freshly oiled and decorated, they march to the chief's village to be redeemed by him from the *n'mizwa* with gifts of cloth. After initiation it is a deadly insult to call a boy by his child-name. All who pass through initiation together consider themselves bound by mutual obligations of hospitality.[1]

Girls' initiation takes place in three stages. First, there is *ciputu*, the general initiation before puberty, which corresponds to the boys' *lupanda*. It takes place at the same time of year, and though it lasts for less than a week, its conclusion is celebrated at *lupanda* jointly with the conclusion of the boys' initiation. A hut is built in the bush, like the long dormitory of the boys, and four days are spent in dancing and singing. Each girl (aged about eight years) is accompanied by a sponsor, a woman friend who continues to be her mentor during subsequent rites, and who assists in giving the girl instruction in her womanly duties. At the end the girls are bathed and anointed, dressed in new clothes, and each is carried to *lupanda* by her sponsor. Here they prove their skill in dancing and receive gifts from their friends. Ritual defloration follows the *ciputu* initiation.[2] Among Mohammedans, clitoridectomy used to be performed by a woman operator, but, it is said, was discontinued in about 1903 on account of the heavy mortality.[3]

After this first general celebration, first pregnancy and first birth are the occasions of separate rites for each girl. According to some informants there were once two ceremonies connected with pregnancy. One, for the young married men whose wives had not yet conceived, used to take place at the same time as *ciputu*; each man was attended by a woman sponsor not his *wife*, given good advice, and put through various tests of manhood. Mitchell does not confirm the present existence of this ceremony, but in the old days if a man was betrothed or married to a child going through her *ciputu* he had to accompany her.

The *litimo* ceremony takes place when a young married woman quickens with child for the first time.[4] The woman, with her sponsor and the married women of the neighbourhood, went out in procession for a ceremony of singing and dancing and instruction to the young couple, followed by a feast. Nowadays no men are allowed to attend *litimo*. A child born of a woman who had not undergone this rite used to be buried alive; nowadays her *anyesa mbumba* is charged by the chief.

Finally, six days after the first child is born, its naming ceremony forms a last initiation rite for its mother. The husband is formally led into her hut by her sponsor and the married women of the neighbourhood, and the child is taken out for the first time to the accompaniment of feasting and dancing.

Most Yao men and women act as sponsors of initiates at least once, and all parti-

[1] Sources for boys' initiation: Stannus and Davey, 1913; Werner, 1906, pp. 124-6; Stannus, c. 1910, pp. 147-63; Hinchel, 1933, pp. 19 sq.; Johnston, 1897, p. 409; Weule, 1, 1909, p. 324.
[2] Stannus, c. 1910, p. 159. [3] Ibid., 1, 1912, p. 198.
[4] Ibid., c. 1910, p. 163; Hinchel, 1933, p. 23. *mlilo li nimumbo* (Sally).

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A Note on Ceremonial Purification among the WaYao, Nyasaland.

By *Meredith Sanderson, M.R.C.S., F.R.G.S.*

One of the effects of European influence in Africa is the breaking up of tribal organization and discipline. The rights of the individual being no longer subordinated to the common good, customs formerly observed by the village community as a whole die out, while those affecting the individual are still practised.

This tendency is well seen in the ancient ceremonies of purification among the WaYao, which are now rarely performed collectively, though the native, however highly "educated," still goes to the doctor to obtain the necessary medicines for removing, for instance, the contamination caused by contact with a corpse.

These collective ceremonies have already been described by various writers in respect of both Nyasaland and elsewhere;‡ but the Yao rites have not, I think, been given in detail, and the following notes may not, therefore, be altogether valueless.

The *Pyajila* ceremony (*kupyajila*, "to sweep") is common to most Bantu tribes. In its simplest form it used to be performed annually by the WaYao, at the beginning of the twelfth month, count of the months (lunar) being kept by means of a "calendar."§ The whole village is thoroughly "spring-cleaned," all rubbish

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* At Ku, where the game is played — All Souls' night in the cemetery, Father Bernadine Ryan tells me, the song in Spanish runs:—

Vaca, vaca, quando tu vuelga,
Vaca, vaca, hay mais.

Vaca, vaca vhen you come,
Vaca, vaca, I shall not be there any more.

Words imported, presumably, to the hidden ball.

† See Sanderson, M. C., "The Babi Indians," pp. 333-341, XXIII. *Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1904.

‡ Frazer, "Golden Bough (Second Ed.)," II., 178, *sqq.*

§ A "calendar" consists of a string tied to two pegs in the wall of the house, or between two poles, on which are threaded twelve pieces of reed, bamboo or cornstalk. One of these is moved to the other end of the string each time a new moon is seen.

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THE WHOLE VILLAGE IS THOROUGHLY "SPRING-CLEANED", ALL RUBBISH
is swept up, the ground round the houses is hoed clean, and the interiors remodelled.
(364) Ceremonial beer is brewed by the head-wife of the chief, and after this has been drunk the ashes of the fire used in the brewing are carefully collected and taken to a muhlosso (" cross-roads," or " diverging of paths ") where they are deposited.
(765) The chief, as representative of his people, bathes in special medicated water, a
(327) decoction made from the bark of ng'wenya and mkoma, and the root of mpingo.
(622) This completes the ordinary annual ceremony, at which new fire is not made.

On certain special occasions a more elaborate ritual is carried out; such occasions are the death of a chief, a threatened epidemic of infectious disease, a murder (especially by shooting) and the frequent occurrence of quarrels in the village.

In such circumstances, in addition to the ordinary *pyapiko* ceremony described above, the porridge sticks of the whole village are removed and all fires extinguished. The discarded sticks and all ashes of the old fires are carried to the meeting of paths, where the former are stuck upright in the ground and the ashes piled together;
(372) this is done in procession, all the people taking part. On their return to the village new fire is made by friction by either the chief or his younger brother—usually the latter; fire procured in any other way would nullify the proceedings. Finally
(765) all the people bathe in the medicated water used only by the chief at the ordinary ceremony.

751 In addition to this special form of the *pyapiko* ceremony, another rite is sometimes
776 performed after the occurrence of a murder or as prophylactic against the spread of epidemic disease. The doctor first makes a kind of trough (*lukungwa*) from the bark of *mtondowindo* or *mpingo*, and procures a *chirikiko* (or *chipengule*) basket—used as a strainer in salt-making. Having collected his medicines he proceeds to the bank of the stream near the usual bathing-place of the village and digs a shallow hole, in which he places the basket; in this he puts the leaves of a certain thorny shrub and covers the whole with the trough, which is banked up with earth so as to be perfectly firm. He then puts his " medicines " into the trough; these are, first, the head of an iron hammer and a piece of slag, both from a smelting furnace. On top of these he puts pieces of the root of a certain tree which has many and particularly sharp thorns, and bits of bark from two trees peculiar for having very straight stems. Having distributed these evenly along the floor of the trough, he fills it with water and then proceeds to construct an arch over the end of the trough furthest from the stream. Two long poles, cut from a kind of tree particularly rich in sap, are planted in the ground, one at each side of the trough and close to it; these are bent over towards each other, and fastened together by means of a strip of their own bark. A bamboo is now planted alongside each, and similarly tied to its fellow. During all these preparations and throughout the ceremony it is essential that the doctor has no knots in any part of his clothing.

The preparations are now complete, and when all the fires in the village have been extinguished the people go in procession to the spot where the doctor awaits them. All must be purely clad and must have no metal about them.

(622) The chief opens the ceremony. He steps into the trough and taking some of the medicated water therefrom in his hands he rinses his mouth with it. He then
(769) offers a prayer to the spirits of his ancestors, first stating the emergency and detailing the measures which are to be taken to deal with it (new fire, sweeping, discard of porridge-sticks and shooting). The prayer over, he splashes the water in the trough over his body and passes through the arch, first throwing some gift (beads or, in more modern times, money) into the trough. These gifts, presumably intended as an offering to the spirits, are the perquisites of the doctor, and everybody is supposed to contribute in turn.

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The men and boys now pass through the arch in order of seniority; each splashes himself with the water in the trough, but neither speaks nor rinses the mouth. The women come next, led by the head-wife of the chief; the latter rinses her mouth and, instructed by the doctor, repeats a prayer similar to that offered by her husband. The remainder of the women merely splash themselves, like the men, before passing through the arch. All then return to the village, where the *pyajila* is continued.

Finally the doctor takes the hammer-head from the trough and hands it to the chief, who rubs the haft into it, and, a hoe having been placed on the ground, goes through the form of forging the latter by beating it with the hammer. He then scrapes the ground with the hoe as if clearing a place overgrown with grass; he does not dig with it so in hoeing up the ground for planting seed. After this rite the chief again bathes in medicated water similar to that in the trough, and the ceremony is complete.

Whereas the *pyajila* ceremony and its adjunct, the rite of the arch, are now but rarely performed, no Yao will omit the rite of purification after a death in his family. This ceremony consists of two essential parts, both protective against the *ndoke*, a disease characterised by dropsy and supposed to be contracted by contact with a corpse, or by association, especially by sharing a meal, with those who have been in such contact. The first of these parts is bathing in certain medicines, which protects the bather from *ndoke*, and the second consists of a sort of communion meal, shared by all friends and especially relatives with those who have been contaminated, and designed to protect these friends and relatives.

The decoction for bathing is made by soaking the roots of *Ingardandati* and *Indemele* in water, together with the bark of *mkanaua*, one piece each from the east and west aspects of the tree; the water assumes a reddish tint, and the whole body is bathed.

The communion meal consists of porridge made from any kind of flour or of rice, and some spends beans. In the latter some scorched and powdered root of *mtendenguleli* is mixed, with a little salt. All near relatives of the deceased must partake of this meal, as well as their wives and their near relatives; part is carefully put aside for the use of any relative unable to be present at the ceremony.

Latterly, since the spread of Islam among the WaYao, this rite has become confused with the distribution of food to the poor at the funeral of a Muslim, and the Arabic word *sadaqa* ("charity") is now generally used for it, to the exclusion of its wider, correct meaning.

It may be mentioned here that after the death of a child the father is denied access to his wife for a period of about three weeks, and the first act must be one of entire interruption.

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